

GSA 2024 APPLICANT GUIDE

Film + Photography



I. Program Description

GSA's **Film + Photography** program focuses on visual communication through photography and film/videography. Students in the program learn a wide variety of technical material and approaches, with a documentary focus for photography balanced by writing, directing, and producing their own films. In addition to instruction and studio time split between still photography and film production/videography, students participate in workshops and demonstrations conducted by guest artists and take field trips to put their knowledge to work. Students discuss and critique their works-in-progress and that of their classmates as part of the studio experience. Faculty members also discuss professional careers in the field and coach students in the preparation of their portfolios. Student work is displayed in a public exhibition on the final day of the program.

****[Click here](#) to view the Film + Photography program photos from GSA 2023****

****[Click here](#) to view Final Student Portfolios from GSA 2023 (Session One)****

****[Click here](#) to view Final Student Portfolios from GSA 2023 (Session Two)****

II. Preliminary Round Application Requirements (due January 14th @ 11:59 p.m. EST/10:59 p.m. CST)

Submit the materials in this section through the online platform [Acceptd](#) no later than **January 14th**.

NOTE: Applicants will be prompted to pay a \$35 application fee when submitting their materials (or \$50 if applying in two artforms). Students on free/reduced lunch may opt to have this fee waived when payment is requested.

For the Preliminary Round, submit the following (see below for more details):

- a. Two Recommendation Forms
- b. Personal Short Essay
- c. Personal Question Video
- d. Artform-Specific Questions
- e. Portfolio Images and Videos
- f. Portfolio Cover Sheet

a. Two Recommendation Forms (do this first!)

Identify two people who will complete recommendation forms in support of your GSA application (*each person will complete the same form separately*):

NOTE: previous GSA application cycles have required recommendations from a teacher and a school administrator. The recommendation guidelines have changed in recent years to broaden the scope of who may complete these forms. Please review the new guidelines below.

The recommendation form includes questions about your artistic abilities/potential, how you contribute to your learning environment/community, and your overall fit for GSA. If you can select two recommenders who can speak to your artistic abilities, we encourage you to do so. However, we understand not every applicant will have one or two recommenders who have experienced the student's artistry. In this case, select recommenders who can speak to your character, accountability, and/or work ethic. Recommenders can be teachers (from inside or outside of your school and in any subject), school administrators (i.e., guidance counselor), mentors, or other people involved in your personal or artistic development such as a coach, youth minister, or staff at an organization for which you volunteer.

You will enter the names and email addresses of each recommender in your online application, and those individuals will receive emails instructing them on how to complete the recommendation form, which will take about five minutes.

Before submitting your recommenders' information, we strongly encourage the following:

- 1. Inform them you are applying for GSA and would like to list them as a recommender.** Tell them they will complete a short form via email, and that their responses are confidential (you will not have access to them). Ask if they have any questions about GSA and/or your desire to apply.
- 2. Confirm what email address you should list for them;** double check that you have the correct spelling.

Submit your recommenders' information as soon as possible so they have plenty of time to complete the forms prior to January 14th. After you have submitted their information, we strongly encourage the following:

- 1. Tell your recommenders to check their email.** The email will come from do-not-reply@getacceptd.com and be titled "Documentation Request from {{your name}} for Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts."
- 2. Ask them to confirm with you when they have submitted the form** – and then tell them thank you! If they have not received the form, ask them to check their junk folder and ensure you entered their email address correctly in the application. Contact GSA if you need to correct an email address.

NOTE: Once you submit your recommenders' information, you will have to click back into your profile to access the remainder of the application; *Acceptd* will refer to this next section as **“Application Part 2.”**

Additional information about recommendations:

- No letters of recommendation are needed, nor should you submit any. Recommenders simply need to complete the form they receive via email.
- Applicants are not able to review the contents of their recommendations.
- Applicants' parents/immediate family may not fill out their recommendation forms.
- While we encourage you to secure the best recommenders possible within the guidelines listed, know that we rely on your personal application materials (essays, artistic work, etc.) as the primary tools to assess your fit for GSA. Recommenders have the option to choose "unknown" if they are not aware of the answer to a question, and this will not be held against you as an applicant.
- If you are applying for two artforms and using the same recommender(s), they must complete two forms (one for each artform), even if their answers are identical.

b. Personal Short Essay (250-word max)

Provide an answer to the following question in essay form:

How can/why should the artform you are applying in be of importance to your community or society as a whole? *Provide an answer that is specific to the artform you are applying for.*

- **Be open, honest, and authentic in your response – let us learn something about you.**
- **Upload this essay response as a document file;** type out the question at the top of your response, so the question and answer are both in the document (the question restatement does not count toward the word count limit).
- **When uploading your essay, title the file, "Personal Short Essay."**

c. Personal Question Video (90-second max)

Provide an answer to the following question in video form:

Why is the artform you are applying in important to you? What are your goals for yourself as an artist in this artform? *Provide an answer that is specific to the artform you are applying for.*

- **Be open, honest, and authentic in your response – let us learn something about you.** While you are encouraged to prepare your thoughts before shooting the video and you may consult notes as you speak, please do not just read off a transcript. We want to get a sense of your personality.
- **Begin your video by stating "Hello, my name is (first/last name)."** Record your answer in an interior space that is free from interruptions, noise, etc. Do not edit or splice the video. You do not need to include an introductory frame or any effects such as fades, etc.

- **Shoot straight on, leaving the camera in one location.** Review the video to ensure you can be seen AND heard. Ensure the video plays all the way to the end.
- **When uploading your Personal Question Video, title the file, "Personal Question Video."**

d. Artform-Specific Questions

Applicants will be asked questions about their specific interests in their artform and their level of access to training/classes/lessons in their artform. Applicants can review the specific questions for their artform once they have submitted their recommender information. There are no right or wrong answers for these questions, nor are we looking for one profile of a student over another – rather, we ask these questions to understand the applicant in the fullest context possible.

e. Portfolio Files

Your Film + Photography portfolio must contain **10 total works**.

Upload your portfolio pieces into the application under “Upload Portfolio.”

Five Required Works

Your submission must include:

- Four photographs (without extreme Photoshop alterations)
- one film of any length or genre. If you have not created a film before, remember your submission can be short, simple, and shot with readily available equipment such as a smart phone, etc. Use your artistic perspective to create something you find interesting and include elements of the criteria (listed later in this document) in your work. We would rather see someone’s first film they’ve ever made than not see them apply at all. You may submit films that are collaborations with others, but you must explain your role in the film (i.e. camera operator, director, etc.) on your Portfolio Cover Sheet (described below).

Five Remaining Works

The remaining five works can consist of a variety of media, including:

- Additional film/video work (documentary, narrative, music video, shorts, etc.)
- Additional still photography (without extreme Photoshop alterations)
- Scripts for movies and/or storyboards
- Audio files
- Any relevant digital art (this includes, but is not limited to, computer generated music, altered images, or designs)
- **No more than two non-photographic prints, drawings, paintings, and/or 3D works** that reflect your approach to film and/or photography.

For all submitted work:

If your work is not already digital, digitize it by taking a digital photo or scanning it. Upload the file into the application. When uploading, verify each image is upright (not sideways), and if film, that it plays smoothly and through to the end.

Save and name your files individually so they correspond to the pieces and titles as listed on your portfolio cover sheet. The first piece listed on your cover sheet should be saved as “01_title”, your second piece as “02_title” and so on. For multiple image files detailing one work or idea (e.g. multiple angles of a 3D piece), title images as “01_title; 01_title_2; 01_title_3” and so on.

f. Portfolio Cover Sheet

This one document should outline all portfolio pieces uploaded as part of your application (note file naming instructions above so your uploaded images correspond with the pieces listed on this sheet). For each work, please include the following:

- Title of Work
- Year of Completion
- Medium (please specify if a work is audio only)
- Length (if film or audio)
- A very brief description of your process for creating this work (if the work is a collaboration, describe your role in the project)

Save this as a document file and upload it into your application.

III. Final Round Requirements

*Some applicants will be invited to participate in the Final Round of GSA Auditions/Reviews, which will consist of the elements described below. All applicants will be notified on February 16th of whether they are invited to the Final Round. **The final round auditions/reviews for Film + Photography on March 15th and 16th will be virtual.***

The Final Round for Film + Photography will include:

- a. Pre-Review Questionnaire
- b. Virtual Portfolio Review and Interview

a. Pre-Review Questionnaire (due via *Acceptd*)

Applicants who advance to the final round will be forwarded to a new section of their application in *Acceptd* (called “**Application Part 3**”). This new part of the application will include a short questionnaire. This questionnaire may cover a range of topics, including your previous experience in your artform, your

favorite artists, and/or your college and career goals. The questionnaire is not a quiz and is not scored, but it is a way for adjudicators to get to know you. The questionnaire may be used to customize questions in your interview.

b. Virtual Portfolio Review/Interview (on March 15th or 16th)

Adjudicators will lead a brief conversation with each applicant about their portfolio and artistic motivations. This is an opportunity for the student to verbally express the qualities of their work as well as their personal artistic perspective. Finalists do not need to have on hand the portfolio pieces submitted for the preliminary round application; adjudicators will review and utilize what the applicant included in their initial GSA application on *Accepted* for the conversation (although applicants should be prepared to talk about their work and may benefit from having the work or images of the work within view for their own reference, when possible). *The duration of portfolio reviews/ interviews will vary at the adjudicators' discretion but will likely last no longer than 15 minutes.*

Finalists will receive the time/date and Zoom link for their review/interview. This will be sent through Accepted's messaging system.

IV. Criteria

The work of each student will be given an objective review by the adjudicators as to how they fulfill each of the following criteria:

Use of Formal Elements

An ideal applicant exhibits successful use of art elements such as line, value, shape, form, space, color, texture, as well as sound and time (if work is video or audio). The applicant uses these elements to create structure and meaning and can speak to how they have done so.

Use of Design Principles and Sense of Composition

An ideal applicant utilizes design principles such as balance, contrast, rule of thirds, orientation, perspective, pattern and framing in their work to guide their use of the formal elements and organization of the piece. The applicant uses these principles to create impact and meaning and can speak to how they have done so.

Technical Skill

An ideal applicant demonstrates practiced skill and developed technique, as well as an awareness of the specific tools, processes, and approaches required by the specific media being used (e.g. shutter speed, aperture, video and/or sound editing, image manipulation, etc.). This does not necessarily mean each piece requires an extremely detailed finished quality, but rather that each piece is crafted in a way that is connected to ideas and materials, equipment, and/media.

Artistic Voice & Originality

An ideal applicant's work is consistently approached from a personalized viewpoint, background or experience; even if the work is the product of an assignment, it reveals an individual or unique point of view or desire. The applicant can identify and explain how their individuality and perspective are evident across the portfolio.

Storytelling & Narrative Choices

An ideal applicant tells a constructed story through their work; the applicant can express how the story supports and conveys their artistic intentions.

Dedication to Artform, Growth, and Community

An ideal applicant demonstrates a commitment to and passion for their artform, as well as a desire and ability to grow as an artist. The applicant can thoughtfully explain why they want to attend GSA and how they are uniquely qualified to contribute to a robust, diverse community of artists.

V. Tips

These tips are suggestions. They are NOT eligibility requirements for admittance to GSA.

- Include **work completed outside of school** and school projects.
- **Diversify** your portfolio with a mix of mediums. We want to know your interest and involvement in various mediums.
- Include **recent work** in your portfolio.
- Be prepared to **talk about the ideas** that went into a particular work.
- Be prepared to **discuss the process of making** your art piece and **why you made certain choices**.
- Be prepared to talk about **why you are interested in Film + Photography**, and why you are interested in attending GSA.
- Be prepared to discuss what you wish to get out of GSA, and your **strengths and challenges** in your artform.
- Be prepared to discuss the work of other artists you admire, and why their work inspires you.
- **Pay close attention to the adjudication criteria**. While GSA students are accepted based on their holistic identity as a young artist, the criteria are the foundation of how your materials are being scored.
- **Remember the adjudicators are very excited to see your work and they want you to do well!** We know it takes hard work to submit this application, and that it can be scary to "put yourself out there." We have faith in you, so put your best foot forward and don't be afraid to show us the wonderful artist you are. You prove a level of dedication just by submitting your application, and you should be proud of yourself.

VI. Application Timeline/Deadlines

January 14th, 2024 - GSA Application Due

All applicant materials must be submitted via *Acceptd* by **11:59 p.m. EST/10:59 p.m. CST**. We encourage you to submit early and not to wait until the last minute, as the application portal runs slowly when many people try to upload at once.

February 16th, 2024 – GSA Finalists Announced

All applicants will be notified of whether they have advanced to the final round of adjudication. Those who've advanced to the final round will also be given instructions on how to complete "Application Part 3" via *Acceptd*.

March 15th & 16th, 2024 – Final Round Auditions/Reviews

All Finalists will attend an audition/review. Some artforms will hold their auditions & reviews in-person at the University of Kentucky, while others will be held virtually. Friday and Saturday auditions/reviews run from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST.

Friday, April 12th, 2024 – Announcement of GSA 2024 Accepted Students and Alternates

All Finalists will be notified of whether they have been accepted into the summer program. Alternates will also be listed. In addition, accepted students will be sent their assigned summer session.

Sunday, June 9th, 2024, to Saturday, June 29th, 2024 – Session One of GSA Summer Program

- *Design will be held in Session One only*

Sunday, July 7th, 2024, to Saturday, July 27th, 2024 – Session Two of GSA Summer Program

- *Dance will be held in Session Two only*
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For technical support with the application, contact *Acceptd*:

***Acceptd* Email:** support@getacceptd.com

***Acceptd* Phone:** 1(888) 725-2122, *press 2*

For questions about the content and/or requirements of the application, please contact GSA:

GSA Office Hours – Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST

GSA Info Box (Email) – gsainfo@kentuckyperformingarts.org

GSA Helpline (Phone) – (502) 566-5192